

JOE SCHWARZ, MD

7TH DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

COMMITTEES:

ARMED SERVICES

READINESS

STRATEGIC FORCES

AGRICULTURE

SPECIALTY CROPS AND FOREIGN

AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

CONSERVATION, CREDIT, RURAL

DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

SCIENCE

ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY, AND STANDARDS

ENERGY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2207

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
128 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
(202) 225-6276

JACKSON OFFICE:
142 NORTH MECHANIC STREET
JACKSON, MI 49201
(517) 783-4488

DELTA TOWNSHIP OFFICE:
6804 WEST SAGINAW HIGHWAY
LANSING, MI 48917
(517) 323-8600

BATTLE CREEK OFFICE:
249 WEST MICHIGAN AVENUE
BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN 49017
(269) 966-8068

January 26, 2006

The Honorable Ken Sikkema
Majority Leader
Michigan Senate
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Ken:

A MIRS piece dated January 6, 2006, indicated that it is your belief that existing statutes dealing with stem cell research do not dampen efforts by our Universities and by companies engaged in life science research to grow those enterprises in Michigan. It is my sincere belief, a belief shared by the academic and scientific community, that Michigan's generally unsupportive, even negative, official position on stem cell research, is a major drawback to our efforts in the Life Sciences.

The United States House of Representatives has passed and sent to the Senate H.R. 810, the Castle-DeGette Bill, which allows stored frozen blastocysts (fertilized eggs at about the 150-200 cell stage, or 48 to 72 hours after fertilization) not used in in-vitro fertilization to be donated to a scientific facility which operates under guidelines promulgated by the National Institutes of Health and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to be used to develop new embryonic stem cell lines.

All existing stem cell lines in the United States which can legally be used for federally supported research in accordance with the Presidential Executive Order of August 2001 are contaminated with mouse feeder cells (these are nutrient cells) and can not be used for any meaningful purpose, research or clinical.

The Congress is on record in support of research using adult stem cells and stem cells derived from umbilical cord blood. Unfortunately, adult stem cells virtually always differentiate into mature cells of the organ from which they are derived, and umbilical cord blood stem cells differentiate only into various types of mature blood cells. The real future in stem cell research, then, is in the pluripotent embryonic stem cells which have the ability to differentiate into any type of mature cell. Embryonic stem cells have the potential to differentiate into the over 200 cell types known to exist in humans. Parkinson's Disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Alzheimer's Disease, Type 1

(juvenile) diabetes, myocardial disease (heart), and hepatic (liver) disease are just a few of the pathologies that could be treated with cells derived from embryonic stem cells.

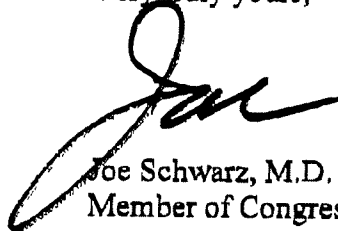
You state in the MIRS article, "that prohibition (of embryonic stem cell research) is not chilling research in the life science areas at all." This is simply not true. Outstanding stem cell researchers have left our state; and it is nearly impossible to recruit people in this field because of retrogressive Michigan statutes.

Sadly, other states, California, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, to name three, have a much more enlightened and welcoming research environment. Even worse, the majority of stem cell research is being done off shore, frequently in countries which do not have the rigorous moral and ethical standards which are the *sine qua non* of research done in the United States.

Michigan's Life Sciences efforts will never begin to approach their real potential unless laws which dampen and discourage these enterprises are stricken from the books. Only then can superb life science research projects thrive at the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Wayne State University, and the Van Andel Institute.

I hope to have the opportunity to discuss this matter with you personally in the very near future. It is an issue which will be of signal importance in the continuation and improvement of basic research in our state and in the revival of our economy.

Very truly yours,



Joe Schwarz, M.D.
Member of Congress

Kon:
understand
+ his in a difficult
issue for members
but 70% Americans
want embryonic stem
cell research to proceed
unfettered in the USA
J.H.S.